

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SANTIA 06605 302120Z

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ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 864

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: CI, PINT, SOC

SUBJECT: THE CARDINAL AND CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

REF: SANTIAGO 6363

1. RAUL CARDINAL SILVA "MOMENTARILY SUSPENDED" EXERCISE OF HIS POSITION AS GRAND CHANCELLOR OF CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY (SANTIAGO) ON OCTOBER 23 AS A RESULT OF DISAGREEMENT WITH RECTOR-DELEGATE JORGE SWETT MADGE OVER WHAT THE CARDINAL TERMED THE "LAMENTABLE WITHDRAWAL" OF JORGE AWAD AS VICE-RECTOR FOR ECONOMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS, REPORTED REFTEL. THE "NUNCIATURA APOSTOLICA" FOLLOWED CARDINAL'S ANNOUNCEMENT WITH STATEMENT THAT THIS DID NOT MEAN AN END TO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND CATHOLIC UNIV.

2. IN OPEN LETTER CARRIED BY LOCAL PRESS, CARDINAL SAYS THAT "MAJORITY OF US (REFERRING TO HIMSELF AND UNIVERSITY DEANS) SEE CIRCUMSTANCES (OF AWAD'S WITHDRAWAL), VERY DIFFERENTLY THAN DOES THE RECTOR." CARDINAL THEN STATED THAT "UNDER CURRENT CONDITIONS" IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO CONTINUE AS GRAND CHANCELLOR, AS HIGH MORAL AUTHORITY WHICH SERVES AS APPEAL TO RESOLVE UNIVERSITY CONFLICTS, OR AS A POINT OF NORMAL UNION BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE UNIVERSITY.

3. THE CARDINAL HAD MET WITH UNIVERSITY DEANS OCT 17 TO DISCUSS AWAD RESIGNATION. DEANS MET WITH SWETT OCT 21 AND
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PAGE 02 SANTIA 06605 302120Z

CARDINAL WITH SWETT OCT 22. THROUGHOUT SWETT REMAINED ADAMANT,

MAINTAINING ONLY HE HAD AUTHORITY TO DISMISS OR APPOINT PERSONNEL. CARDINAL'S LETTER FOLLOWED OCT 23. BY STATUTE, DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN CARDINAL (AS GRAND CHANCELLOR) AND RECTOR ARE SUPPOSED TO BE RESOLVED BY HOLY SEE; A POINT MADE IN ANNEX TO LETTER. (UNSIGNED ANNEX LISTING 15 PRINCIPLES ON WHICH CARDINAL'S ACTION BASED, WAS REPORTEDLY ATTACHED TO LETTER BUT HAS NOT BEEN PUBLISHED BY PRESS).

4. ALONG WITH AWAD AND SEPAG (REFTEL), THREE OTHER FUNCTIONARIES RESIGNED, ACCORDING TO OCT 25 "EL MERCURIO" STORY. MEANWHILE, RAUL LECAROS BECAME PERSONNEL DIRECTOR REPORTING DIRECTLY TO SWETT, AND ACADEMIC VICE-RECTOR FERNANDO MARTINEZ IS ACTING ADMIN. VICE RECTOR. LACAROS IS REPORTEDLY AN ULTRA-RIGHTIST (PATRIA Y LIBERTAD" TYPE) WHO IS NOT TRUSTED BY ACADEMIC COMMUNITY. ONE EMBASSY SOURCE TOLD CAO THAT SWETT AND LECAROS HAVE LIST OF 54 KEY PEOPLE THEY WISH TO REPLACE AT UNIVERSITY BEFORE IT RETURNS TO CHURCH CONTROL IN MARCH 1975 UNDER GOC-CHURCH AGREEMENT.

5. COMMENT: OUR INFORMATION IS THAT CARDINAL'S MEETING WITH RECTOR WAS HEATED ONE WITH SWETT OBSTINATELY HOLDING ON TO HIS POSITION REGARDING RECENT RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENT OF LECAROS. CARDINAL'S WITHDRAWAL AND PUBLICATION OF LETTER REFERRING TO "CURRENT TENSIONS" AND OPEN DISAGREEMENT ARE FURTHER EXAMPLES OF HIS WILLINGNESS TO TAKE PUBLIC STANCE ON MATTERS OF CHURCH OR MORAL INTEREST.

6. IN LOW-KEY COMMENT FROM INFORMAL SOURCE, GOVT TOOK HANDS-OFF ATTITUDE, INDICATING DESIRE TO PLAY DISPUTE DOWN AND KEEP OUT OF IT AT LEAST AT THIS STAGE.

7. AS EXPLANATION OF WHY CARDINAL PICKED THIS ISSUE TO MAKE STAND ON, ONE SOURCE SAID AWAD AND SEPAG ARE HIGHLY REGARDED BY A SENIOR ADVISOR TO CARDINAL WHO HAS CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE WITH HIM.
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